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SUBJECT: THE RISE OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION IN NUEVO LEON

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¶1. (U) Summary. During the past three decades, Mexico has seen an increase in the migration of indigenous people to the more urban areas of the country for economic reasons and Nuevo Leon has seen a sharp increase in the number of migrants to the state. Along with the rise in populations with distinct cultures, languages, and traditions come inherent difficulties such as cultural discrimination, lack of access to government services, and harassment. A comprehensive multi-sectional approach is needed to address the problem; only time will tell whether the Nuevo Leon state government has appropriately configured its bureaucratic resources in search of the solution.
End Summary.

¶2. (U) According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), in 1895, 25.9% of Mexico's total national population consisted of indigenous people. This figure decreased to 10.2% in 1930 and was as low as 4.3% in 1960. However, since then, the population has risen. In 1994, it was 7.4% and 10.5% in 2000. Mexico's Human Development Index for 2000 finds that there were 10.3 million indigenous people of a total Mexican population of 97.5 million. The majority of indigenous people predominately reside in the southern part of the country. Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Veracruz states have the largest populations. However, migration to other areas, such as Nuevo Leon, has been an increasing phenomenon ever since the 1970s with the industrialization and expansion of the service sector. Since 1995, there has been a stark increase in migration to urban areas of the country. Indigenous people began arriving, attracted by the economic boom in these regions.

¶3. (U) The INEGI statistics reveal that while there were 787 indigenous language speakers in Nuevo Leon in 1970, by 2005 this total had risen to 29,538. However, the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages (CDI) conducted its own study using different criteria and determined that the indigenous population in Nuevo Leon in 2000 was actually 30,051. The 2005 figure from CDI estimates the number of indigenous people in Nuevo Leon to be 59,174, which is 1.4% of the total state population. Unlike the INEGI study that classified indigenous people as only those speaking an indigenous language, the CDI study took into account other sectors of the population. It accounted for children 0-4 years old who do not yet speak, non-speakers of indigenous languages who nonetheless identify as indigenous, and indigenous people who did not participate in the census such as domestic servants living outside of their homes (living with their employers instead). This gives a more realistic figure for the number of indigenous people living in the state.

14. (U) The indigenous people living in Nuevo Leon come from primarily 6 major indigenous groups: the Nahuas and Tenek of the Huasteca Region, the Zapotecos and Mixtecos from Oaxaca, the Otomies from Queretaro, and the Mazahuas from Mexico State. The Nahuas and Tenek hail from the Huasteca Region of San Luis Potosi, Veracruz, and Hidalgo. They have chosen the agricultural fields and urban centers of Nuevo Leon to relocate. They are mainly young, single women. 85-90% work in domestic services. They live in the mostly wealthy zones such as San Pedro, Monterrey, and Guadalupe. The Zapotecos come from Oaxaca, are primarily married, and migrated to Nuevo Leon with their families. The Otomies come from Queretaro and are generally the least educated and live congregated with one another. They are married with families and principally work in the commercial sector. The vast majority of Mixtecos live in Juarez, Nuevo Leon in the Hector Caballero colony. The Mixtecos also originate from Oaxaca and mainly work as domestic servants. Approximately half are married. Finally, the Mazahuas come from the State of Mexico. They principally earn money as street vendors.

15. (U) The indigenous people who relocate arrive with various disadvantages and face cultural differences. They have difficulty maneuvering the governmental system and cannot take advantage of institutional support systems and public services such as healthcare and education due to language problems, illiteracy, racism, ignorance of their rights, and vulnerability to police abuse, extortion, and crime. There is lack of judicial processes and legal protection of indigenous workers. It is difficult for them to obtain houses and legal residency as well. They have civil registration problems and no translation services available to them. Moreover, institutional violence and abuse of power is prevalent against ambulatory vendors and domestic servants.

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16. (U) PolOff spoke to Dr. Severine Durin, the coordinator of the Indigenous Migration Project of Northeast Mexico and author of several publications relating to indigenous populations in Monterrey. According to Durin, all of the municipalities of Nuevo Leon are reporting second-generation births to indigenous peoples, with the exception of Juarez. This indicates that the migration of indigenous people is not a recent phenomenon. In all of the municipalities, except for upper-class San Pedro, the majority of indigenous people have lived in Nuevo Leon since at least 1995.

17. (U) The nature of employment found in Nuevo Leon is an indicator of the gender imbalance. The vast majority of indigenous people find work in domestic services, a sector of employment that is traditionally female. Men work in labor, factories, gardens, and agricultural work. As indicated by Dr. Durin's research, of the 9,809 employed indigenous people in the greater Monterrey municipal area, 4,201 (42.8%) work in the domestic service sector. The next highest area of employment are factory and construction workers with 1,083 (11%), and 798 (8.1%) in sales and commercial services. The remaining sectors are food preparation, machine operators, office/school/hospital services, street vendors, and laborers or helpers.

18. (U) PolOff attended the "Workshop for the Awareness of Indigenous Matters for Government Officials of Nuevo Leon State" on December 10-11, 2009. The event was organized by the Nuevo Leon State Human Rights Commission (CEDH), the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages (CDI), and the Secretary of Social Development for the Nuevo Leon State Government. Many government sectors were in attendance,

including various municipal police forces, the Housing Institute, the Cultural House, the State Institute for Women, and government agencies representing education, immigration, and the judiciary sectors.

19. (U) Comment. While the workshop's principal goal was to promote awareness of the plight of the indigenous population in Nuevo Leon, the event's sponsors also saw it as a vehicle to help consolidate efforts across multiple government organizations to increase supervision and multiply resources. Clearly, a comprehensive multi-sectional approach is needed to address the problem; only time will tell whether the Nuevo Leon state government has appropriately configured its bureaucratic resources in search of the solution. End Comment.
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